THE CANADA JAY.

+GARRULUS CANADENSIS, *Linn.*

PLATE CCXXXIV.—MALE, FEMALE, AND YOUNG.

I have found this species of Jay breeding in the State of Maine, where many individuals belonging to it reside the whole year, and where in fact so many as fifteen or twenty may be seen in the course of a day by a diligent person anxious to procure them. In the winter, their numbers are constantly augmented by those which repair to that country from places farther north. They advance to the southward as far as the upper parts of the State of New York, where the person who first gave intimation to Mr. WILSON that the species was to be found in the Union, shot seven or eight one morning, from which number he presented one to the esteemed author of the "American Ornithology," who afterwards procured some in the same neighbourhood. This species is best known in Maine by the name of the "Carrion-bird," which is usually applied to it on account of its carnivorous propensities. When their appetite is satisfied, they become shy, and are in the habit of hiding themselves amongst close woods or thickets; but when hungry, they shew no alarm at the approach of man, nay, become familiar, troublesome, and sometimes so very bold as to enter the camps of the "lumberers," or attend to rob them of the bait affixed to their traps. My generous friend, EDWARD HARRIS, Esq., of Moorestown, New Jersey, told me that while fishing in a birch canoe on the lakes in the interior of the State of Maine, in the latter part of the summer of 1833, the Jays were so fearless as to alight in one end of his bark, while he sat in the other, and help themselves to his bait, taking very little notice of him.

The lumberers or wood-cutters of this State frequently amuse themselves in their camp during their eating hours, with what they call "transporting the carrion bird." This is done by cutting a pole eight or ten feet in length, and balancing it on the sill of their hut, the end outside the entrance being baited with a piece of flesh of any kind. Immediately on seeing the tempting morsel, the Jays alight on it, and while they are busily engaged in devouring it, a wood-cutter gives a smart blow to the end of the pole within the hut, which seldom fails to drive the birds high in the air, and not unfrequently kills them. They even enter the camps, and would fain eat from the hands of the men while at their meals. They are easily caught in any

kind of trap. My friend, the Rev. JOHN BACHMAN, informed me that when residing in the State of New York, he found one caught in a snare which had been set with many others for the common Partridge or "Quail," one of which the Jay had commenced eating before he was himself caught.

In the winter they are troublesome to the hunters, especially when the ground is thickly covered with snow, and food consequently scarce, for, at such a time, they never meet with a Deer or a Moose hung on a tree, without mutilating it as much as in their power. In the Bay of Fundy I observed, several mornings in succession, a Canada Jay watching the departure of a Crow from her nest, after she had deposited an egg. When the Crow flew off, the cunning Jay immediately repaired to the nest, and carried away the egg. I have heard it said that the Canada Jay sometimes destroys the young of other birds of its species, for the purpose of feeding its own with them; but not having witnessed such an act, I cannot vouch for the truth of the report, which indeed appears to me too monstrous to be credited.

I have often been delighted by the sight of their graceful movements on alighting after removing from one tree to another, or while flying across a road or a piece of water. They have an odd way of nodding their head, and jerking their body and tail, while they emit their curiously diversified notes, which at times resemble a low sort of mewing, at others the sound given out by an anvil lightly struck with a hammer. They frequently alight about the middle of a tree, and hop with airy grace from one branch to another until they reach the very top, when they remove to another tree, and thus proceed through the woods. Their flight resembles that of the Blue Jay, although I do not consider it quite so firm or protracted.

The Canada Jay breeds in Maine, in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador. It begins so early as February or March to form its nest, which is placed in the thickest part of a fir tree, near the trunk, and at a height of from five to ten feet. The exterior is composed of dry twigs, with moss and grass, and the interior, which is flat, is formed of fibrous roots. The eggs, which are from four to six, are of a light grey colour, faintly marked with brown. Only one brood is raised in the season. I found the young following their parents on the 27th of June, 1833, at Labrador, where I shot both old and young, while the former was in the act of feeding the latter.

The young, which was fully fledged, had no white about the head; the whole plumage was of a very deep slate colour, approaching to black, excepting the ends of the tail feathers, which were of a sullied white, the lower mandible almost white. The bill was (of course) shorter than that of the old bird, more dilated at the base, the bristles there proportionally shorter.

The legs were of a deep purplish-black. In short, it bore a perfect resemblance to the bird called the "Short-billed Jay, or Whisky-Jack, *Garrulus brachyrrhynchus*," of my excellent friend Mr. SWAINSON, as described and figured by himself and Dr. RICHARDSON in their beautiful and valuable *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, (Vol. II. p. 296, Pl. 551.) So unlike the parent birds did the young of this species appear, that before I saw them fed by the old ones, I urged my young companions to shoot every one of the brood, thinking they might be of a new species. The contents of the stomach of both young and old birds were insects, *leaves of fir trees*, and eggs of ants. The intestines measured one foot eleven inches. The flesh of both was of a dark bluish colour, and smelt strongly of their food.

I was induced to give a figure of the young of the Canada Jay simply because, as above mentioned, my friend Mr. SWAINSON formed of it a new species, under the name of *Garrulus brachyrrhynchus*. The account given of this alleged species, at page 296 of the second part of the *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, is as follows:—"The only specimen brought home of the Short-billed Jay was killed on the roof of the dwelling-house at Fort Franklin. Its general appearance and manners resemble those of the Canada Jay or Whisky-Jack so strongly, that we did not recognise it as a distinct species, and consequently did not ascertain whether it completely replaces the Canadian one in high latitudes, or whether both exist in the same localities." The description of the habits of the Canada Jay or "Whisky-Jack," in the same work, may here be referred to:—

"This inelegant but familiar Jay inhabits the woody districts from latitude 65° to Canada, and in the winter time makes its appearance in the northern section of the United States. Scarcely has the winter traveller in the Fur Countries chosen a suitable place of repose in the forest, cleared away the snow, lighted his fire, and prepared his bivouac, when the Whisky-Jack pays him a visit, and boldly descends into the circle to pick up any crumbs of frozen fish or morsels of pemmican that have escaped the mouths of the hungry and weary sledge-dogs. This confidence compensates for the want of many of those qualities which endear others of the feathered tribes to man. There is nothing pleasing in the voice, plumage, form, or attitudes of the Whisky-Jack; but it is the only inhabitant of those silent and pathless forests which, trusting in the generosity of man, fearlessly approaches him; and its visits were, therefore, always hailed by us with satisfaction. It is a constant attendant at the fur-posts and fishing-stations, and becomes so tame in winter as to eat from the hand; yet it is impatient of confinement, and soon pines away if deprived of liberty. It hops actively from branch to branch, but, when at rest, sits with its head retracted and the plumage of the body very loose. Its voice is plaintive and squeaking; though it occasion-

ally makes a low chattering, especially when agitated by the prospect of a supply of food. It hoards berries, pieces of meat, &c. in hollow trees, or between layers of the bark of decaying birches, by which it is enabled to pass the winter in comfort, and to rear its young before the snow is off the ground, and indeed earlier than any other in the Fur Countries. Its nest is concealed with such care, that none of the Indians with whom I spoke on the subject had seen it; but both HUTCHINS and HEARNE informs us, that 'it is generally built in a fir tree, of sticks and grass; the eggs are blue; and the young brood, which are quite black, take to flight by the middle of May.' "

Now, to my eye, the Canada Jay is as elegant in its movements, whether perched or on wing, as any other of our Jays, although its apparel is certainly very homely. It is joyous and lively at all times, even when, pushed by extreme hunger, it approaches the lonely camp of the traveller, with the hope of obtaining a share, however small, of his perhaps scanty fare.

Its range is very extensive, as I have specimens procured by Mr. TOWNSEND on the Columbia river, and it has been observed by Dr. RICHARDSON as far northward as lat. 65°. The former of these naturalists states that he found "these birds at the site of Old Fort Astoria, on the Columbia river. They were very noisy and active; the voice is strong and harsh. The Indians however say, that they are rarely seen, and that they do not breed hereabouts." Mr. TITIAN PEALE has obtained it in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, and I have the body of one procured there by himself in October 1836.

The description given in the Fauna Boreali-Americana of the individual there represented, agrees in all respects with that of the bird now before you, which *I saw fed several times by its parent the Canada Jay*. The differences pointed out as specifically distinctive are merely such as are presented by young and old birds of many species.

CANADA JAY, *Corvus canadensis*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 33.

CORVUS CANADENSIS, Bonap. Syn., p. 58.

GARRULUS CANADENSIS, *Whisky-Jack*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 295.

GARRULUS BRACHYRHYNCHUS, *Short-billed Jay*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 296. Young.

GARRULUS CANADENSIS, *Canada Jay*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 232.

SHORT-BILLED JAY, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 599.

CANADA JAY, *Corvus canadensis*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 53; vol. v. p. 208.

Upper parts dull leaden-grey; lower dull yellowish-white; forehead yellowish-white; hind part of the head and neck greyish-black; throat and band passing round the neck, greyish-white; secondary quills and tail-feathers

narrowly tipped with white. Young very dull slate-colour, paler on the abdomen, on the head blackish, wings and tail as in the adult, their tips of a duller white.

Male, 11, 15.

Rare, and only in winter, from Pennsylvania to New York. More abundant in Massachusetts. Common from Maine northward to the Fur Countries. Columbia river.

The description of two young birds, one procured in Labrador, the other in Nova Scotia, is, as to form and plumage, the same as that of the adult, the latter, however, being as follows: The bill, instead of being compressed, is broader than high at the base, and moderately compressed only toward the end; the fifth quill is longest, the sixth and fourth nearly equal; and the plumage is remarkably soft, full, and loose, as in many Titmice.

In the young the plumage is still looser, the filaments being distinct, but the feathers are shorter than in the adult. The wings and tail are similar. The bill is dusky, with the edges of both mandibles yellow; the feet as in the adult. The general tint is very deep dull slate-colour, paler on the abdomen; the feathers at the base of the bill and the ear-coverts greyish-black; inner webs of the quills brownish-black; edges of the outer primaries yellowish-grey, of the rest bluish-grey; tips of all the quills, the three outer excepted, greyish-white; tail approaching to dull leaden-grey, broadly tipped with dull yellowish-white. Another young bird is similar, but with the bill darker, and a band of dull white from the base of the lower mandible to the ears, as in the individual represented in the plate.

The specimen presented by Mr. PEALE, and preserved in spirits, presents the following characters. The tongue is triangular, flattened above, tapering to a blunt emarginate point, and having a single prominent papilla at the base on each side. The œsophagus is $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, tapering, its diameter anteriorly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, below $\frac{1}{4}$. Proventriculus $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth. The stomach is broadly elliptical, compressed, 11 twelfths long, 9 twelfths broad; its muscular coat $\frac{3}{4}$ twelfths in thickness, not divided into distinct lateral and inferior muscles; the tendons elliptical, their greatest diameter 4 twelfths; the epithelium thin, tough, brownish-red, longitudinally marked with broad rugæ. The contents of the stomach are numerous remains of insects, a large hairy caterpillar, 2 inches long, and two persimon seeds. The intestine is $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

The trachea is 2 inches 5 twelfths long, flattened, tapering from 2 twelfths in breadth to 1 twelfth, of about 50 well ossified rings. The inferior laryngeal muscles are large, and four in number on each side, exclusive of the sterno-tracheal. The bronchi are wide, of about 12 cartilaginous half rings.

QUERCUS ALBA, *Willd.*, Sp. Pl., vol. iv. p. 429. *Michaux*, Arbr. Forest. de l'Amerique Sept., vol. ii. p. 13, pl. 1. *Pursh*, Flor. Amer. Sept., vol. ii. p. 633.—MONÆCIA POLYANDRIA, *Linn.*—AMENTACEÆ, *Juss.*

Leaves oblong, pinnatifido-sinuate, downy beneath, the lobes linear-lanceolate, obtuse, attenuated at the base, entire on the margin; the fruit pedunculate, the cupule tubercular, flat at the base, cup-shaped, the acorn ovate. Although this species of oak is not abundant in Maine, where the Canada Jay chiefly occurs, I have employed it in my drawing, on account of the rich colouring of its fine leaves during the autumnal months. It is in Louisiana, where it is plentiful, that one must see it, to judge of the grandeur which it attains under favourable circumstances. I have often seen these oaks spreading their young branches amid the tops of *magnolias* fully one hundred feet above the ground, with stems from four to six feet in diameter, to the height of fifty or more feet, straight as a line, and without a branch to that height. When left in fields, their tops, naturally inclined to spread, render their aspect majestic; and one is tempted to try to calculate the many years these noble trees have stood against the blast of the tempest. The wood, which is of excellent quality, being hard and durable, is applied to numerous uses. Its distribution is very extensive in the United States, it being found in the forests from Louisiana to Massachusetts, and in the western countries beyond the Mississippi.

GENUS IV.—NUCIFRAGA, *Briss.* NUTCRACKER.

Bill as long as the head, moderately stout, conical, compressed, at the tip rather depressed; upper mandible with its dorsal line slightly arcuato-declinate, the ridge convex, the sides rounded, the edges sharp and overlapping, without notch, the tip flattened and obtuse; lower mandible with the angle short and rounded, the dorsal line straight, the sides convex, the edges sharpened a little involute, the tip flattened and rather obtuse. Nostrils basal, lateral, roundish, covered by bristly feathers, which are directed forwards. Head large, broadly ovate, neck rather short; body moderately stout. Tarsus rather short, compressed, with eight scutella; toes stout, the

Canada Jay.

1. Male. 2. Female 3. Young

White Oak. Quercus alba.

Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Canada Jay, *Garrulua canadensis*, Linn. [Pl. 234]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 121–126. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319347>.

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